



**2021**  
**NATIONAL**  
**VETERANS**  
**CREATIVE ARTS**  
**FESTIVAL**

**EASTERN COLORADO  
VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM  
LOCAL COMPETITION**

**Creative Writing  
Division Handbook**

Presented by

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



American Legion  
Auxiliary

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## *Message from the Director*

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While COVID-19 continues to impact our lives daily, we know the benefits of creating art can have far reaching effects on one's overall health and well-being. Studies show that spending time on a creative arts project can relieve stress, strengthen thinking skills and improve memory. Though art you can inspire and encourage others. No matter how far apart we are, art can help us to relax and bring us closer together.

The 2021 local creative arts competitions may look different this year. Each VA facility is taking preventative measures out of concern for the safety and well-being of Veterans, including visitors and staff at VA facilities. There may not be in-person art/writing/performance shows taking place this year on VA campuses. Veterans may need to submit their own images, videos, and text to the VA staff contact persons rather than dropping things off in person.

The following are competition rules and categories. There **are many changes** in the competition handbook this year. Please take the time to review this handbook carefully. If you have further questions or need assistance, you may contact the national chairpersons or me at any time.

Veterans, we thank you for sincerely for sharing your creativity with us and staff, we thank you for supporting Veterans in their creative endeavors.

Amy Kimbler, MT-BC  
Director, National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

### **National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) LOCAL COORDINATORS FOR EASTERN COLORADO**

**Sarah El Hage**  
Office: 720-723-3156  
Cell: 303-518-1382

**Allison Robbins**  
Office: 720-857-5997

**VHAECHRMRArtCommittee@va.gov**

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# 2021 Timeline

**February 12** – Applications due for RMR Art Display (This is not the competition, display at RMR only)

**February 23 at 1:00-2:30pm** - Virtual Informational NVCAF Meeting

Call (404) 397- 1596 , enter code 1992809978# then # again when prompted to put in a moderator code

**February 25** – RMR Art Display Rotation (This is not the competition, display at RMR only)

**Creative Arts Local Competition Applications accepted between February 25 – June 11, 2021**

- All paperwork including entries for art, creative writing, dance, music, and drama due June 11
- Physical artwork entries must be at VA on or before June 24
- Assistance with filming for dance, music and drama is available during this timeframe (RSVP required)

**June 11** – Application paperwork due

**June 24** - Drop off art entries at RMRVAMC Auditorium

**June – October** – Competition artwork will be on display at RMRVAMC

**Fall (Dates TBD)** - Local NVCAF Awards Ceremony, Readings and Performances

**October 1** – Local judging and winning entries are submitted to National

**October 28** - Pick up Art entries at RMRVAMC

**Winter (Date TBD)** – National NVCAF Winners Celebration and Awards Ceremony

**April 18-24, 2022** - National Veterans Creative Arts Festival in St. Petersburg, FL

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## Definitions and Abbreviations

**DIVISIONS** are Art, Creative Writing, Dance, Drama, and Music

**CATEGORIES** are the types of pieces inside each division. Examples of categories inside the Art division are oil painting, color photography, carving, and leather kit. Creative Writing are poetry, essay, short story, etc.

**VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (ECHCS).** Veterans entering competition must receive care within any VA/CBOC within this VA system. This includes Colorado Springs, Pueblo, etc. If you receive your primary care in another system, you must enter at that VA facility s.

**RMRVAMC (Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center)** located in Aurora, CO. This is the main VA facility within the ECHCS system. Local coordinators, meetings and art display are located at this facility.

**ECHCS Local Competition** – The first phase of the NVCAF competition. Each VA facility holds competitions at the local level, winners at the local level advance to the national phase. Local requirements may vary based on location and resources of each VA facility.

**NVCAF (National Veterans Creative Arts Festival)** – The Festival is located in a different city each year where the national winners of the competition participate in a weeklong festival of workshops, stage shows, and more.

**Local Coordinators** – VA Staff organizing the local competition and liaison between National Coordinators and Veteran participants. Local coordinators will assist in process from the local to national phase of the festival. Local Coordinators at ECHCS are Sarah El Hage and Allision Robbins

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# How to Participate

**Any Veteran receiving their care at any VA Facility may participate in the NVCAF.** Veterans receiving care at ECHCS, to include RMRVAMC and Clinics around Eastern Colorado, may participate in the ECHCS Local Competition. If a Veteran is receiving care at another VA Health Care System, please contact the NVCAF Local Coordinators at that facility, typically Recreation, Creative Arts and/or Music Therapy Departments. If you need assistance finding the appropriate Local Coordinator, please contact us for more information.

**CAREFULLY READ THROUGH ALL INFORMATION IN EACH OF THE DIVISION HANDBOOK(S) YOU ARE ENTRING (ART, CREATIVE WRITING, MUSIC, DANCE, DRAMA).** If you don't have the handbook you are interested in, see below for options.

## **OBTAINING INFORMATIONAL HANDBOOKS AND APPLICATIONS:**

1. **Go online** to download and print at [www.denver.va.gov/services/recreational\\_therapy.asp](http://www.denver.va.gov/services/recreational_therapy.asp) or scan this QR code from your smart phone
2. **Contact Recreation Therapy using MyHealthVet** - You may request handbooks, ask questions and submit applications using this secure site.
3. **Email [vhaechrmrartcommittee@va.gov](mailto:vhaechrmrartcommittee@va.gov)** - Do not provide any patient information as this is not secure, please only provide your division of interest and we will send you a copy of the application(s). For Patient Privacy, DO NOT SUBMIT APPLICATIONS USING THIS EMAIL, IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WE CANNOT REPLY. You may ask questions, obtain applications and submit photos using this email address.



**Call Local Coordinators** to have one mailed to you or to pick up at RMRVAMC. Allow extra time for this option. Contact Numbers are on page 2.

**Applications and information how to submit your application and entry can be found in the respective division handbook.** In efforts to save paper, division handbooks and applications are mailed to you only if you have indicated what division you are interested in entering. If you did not receive the handbook you would like to enter, please contact us to update your division of interest and obtain copies using the options above.

# Submitting Creative Writing Applications and Entries

Review “SUBMITTING DIGITAL IMAGE FILES” Section(s) in your respective Division Handbook on how to submit CD/DVD’s, photos of artwork, Creative Writing entries along with your digital or hard copy of your application. Each Division has specific requirements on how to submit your entries. Review each handbook carefully.

**FOR PATIENT PRIVACY, EMAILS OF APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.** Submitting entries via email will only be accepted if arranged and approved by Local Coordinators but not the applications. Unsecured emails with patient information will be immediately deleted and VA staff will not reply. If available to assist Veteran, any VA Staff may send ENCRYPTED applications via VA email

**Application and entries must be at RMRVAMC by due dates, not postmarked by due date.** If there is a concern it will not arrive on time, contact Local Coordinators for more information and potential options.

## REQUIRED APPLICATION CHECK LIST

✓	<u>Required Paperwork</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>File type and submission requirements</u>
	<b>Creative Writing Entry</b>	<b>Creative Writing</b>	Word Document Only. No Hard Copy, PDFs or other file types
	<b>Application Entry Form(s)</b>	<b>All – One form for each entry</b>	Hard Copy, Word Document or PDF’s only.
	<b>Signed VA National and Local Consent Forms (2 Forms)</b>	<b>All – One set of forms per participant</b>	Hard copies or PDF’s only.
	<b>A written statement/narrative</b>	<b>All – Only if noted in the category number</b>	Word document only. No hard copies, PDF’s or other file types
	<b>Photo(s) of artwork</b>	<b>Art</b>	Hard copy or JPEG image(s) only. No PDFs or other file types
	<b>RMRVAMC Agreement and Application for art display only</b>	<b>Art – One form per participant</b>	Hard Copy, Word Document or PDF’s only.
	<b>DVD Video of Performing Arts Entry</b>	<b>Music, Dance, Drama</b>	Rewritable DVD’s only with editable options. Videos sent on a CD or Cell Phone will not open on VA computers.

**WHEN READY TO SUBMIT APPLICATION PAPERWORK AND PHOTOS,**  
**THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE :**

1. **Drop Off** Digital files saved on a CD/DVD in locked grey box located in Voluntary Service (Bldg G, First Floor)  
Monday – Friday 7:00am – 4:00pm.
2. **Make Appointment** with Local Coordinators for hand delivery (Contact info on page 2)
3. **MyHEALTHeVet VA Secure Messaging:** Instructions provided separately
4. **Mail** hard copies of application with digital files of entry(ies) saved on a CD/DVD to:

**Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center**  
**1700 N. Wheeling St.**  
**Attn: Recreation Therapy #117 - NVCAF**  
**Aurora, CO 80045**

Drop-off and hand delivery options may not be available at times due to Covid-19 and/or VA hospital restrictions. For safety reasons please consider mailing or using MyHealtheVet. If you are unsure what is available, contact coordinators for updates

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## Submitting Digital Files and Written Entries

### Digital Image/CD Requirements

- **Only Word Document** files will be accepted. **If you need assistance typing up your entry contact local coordinators for options**
- ***DO NOT SEND HARD COPIES, it will not be accepted***
- Entries must be submitted in **12-point font**
- Entries must be submitted as text only. Do not send documents with pictures or graphics. Only the text of the entry will be judged.
- **NO USB or any other external drives will be accepted, they will not open on VA computers**
- **One CD** is acceptable to submit all required paperwork and images.
- There are no restrictions on file size or types (such as .jpg)
- **Labeling CDs/DVDs:** Be sure to label the CDs with Veteran name(s) and title of entry(ies)
- **CDs and DVDs cannot be returned.** Please make duplicate copies of the media files and all paperwork for your records

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# Rules for All Divisions

1. **All eligible Veterans will be given the opportunity and encouraged to participate regardless of degree of talent and experience**
2. **Eligibility: Veteran must be enrolled to receive care at a VA medical facility before entering your local competition.** This facility should be the site where he/she receives their primary care. He/she can submit an entry in creative writing, dance, drama or music categories with a Veteran or group from another VA facility, but still represents and must go through his/her originating VA facility to enter the competition. Eligible Veterans are only permitted to enter through one VA facility competition each year.
3. Each Veteran must work with a VA staff person from the VA facility at which he/she receives his/her primary treatment to submit entries into the competition, or risk disqualification.
4. A 10-3203 form (Consent for Production and Use of Verbal or Written Statements, Photographs, Digital Images, and/or Video or Audio Recordings by VA) and additional local release forms must be completed and signed by every Veteran entering the local and national level of competition.
5. Entries created/recorded/written by Veterans who have passed away prior to the national deadline in October 1, 2021 are not eligible to be submitted to the national level of competition.
6. Veteran will be allowed to enter **up to three entries in each division and one entry per category.** In addition, Veterans can also enter into group category outside of their individual submissions. Example: In the art division, Veterans can enter one acrylic, one watercolor and one drawing, however cannot enter two acrylic entries.
7. It is acceptable for an entry to be submitted into multiple divisions if the rules are followed for each division. Example: A poem entry can be submitted into the Creative Writing division and the Drama division.
8. Veterans may not expand the number of their entries in any one division using a different name (for example: pen names, stage names, different artist names, etc.).
9. Veterans who have received a gold medal in the same category from any of the 5 divisions (art, creative writing, dance, drama, and music) for two consecutive years must enter a different category the third year. Failure to comply with this rule will result in the entry being disqualified.
10. Veterans may not enter the same art, creative writing, dance, drama and music entry again once it has won first-place nationally. Failure to comply with this rule will result in disqualification of the entry. Additionally, Veterans should be encouraged to enter new material each year rather than repeat entries.
11. Veterans in national first, second and third place groups of up to five in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music will each be presented a medal. Groups of 6 or more will be presented a medal if possible or will be provided an award certificate. Non-Veterans and Veterans serving as accompanists, or dance partners, or dramatic readers that enhance an entry will not receive medals or certificates.

12. Prior to submitting entries in the competition, eligible Veterans who are also VA employees should discuss leave options/restrictions with their supervisor in the event they might be invited to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.
13. References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that requires a write-up.
14. Final results of each of the five divisions of national competition will be sent via E-mail to staff contact by late -December.
15. Funding and arrangements for travel to and from the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival for returning Veterans invited to attend the NVCAF is the responsibility of the Veteran. Funding for transportation could possibly be supported through donations. Lodging, meals and ground transportation during the Festival week will be provided through national Festival funds. These expenses will be provided for up to 8 eligible Veterans invited in the Group Categories.
16. Stage show performance costumes for winning acts invited to the Festival will be the responsibility of the participant(s). Male participants will be requested to bring black pants and a white collared, long-sleeve dress shirt. Other production number costumes such as vests, ties, etc., will be provided. Women participants will be provided a Festival chorus dress.
17. Veterans who are invited to the Festival must be prepared to send an E-mail including the lyrics for music and dance and words/narration for drama entries in order for this to be placed in the show script.
18. First-place ties in a category at the local competition **MUST** be re-judged at the local level as only one entry for each category will be accepted from each VA facility.
19. Judges reserve the right to move an entry to the appropriate category or disqualify the entry if rules are not followed.

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## Creative Writing Division Rules

Creative Writing Division differs from categories in the Drama Division which are judged on *performance* qualities (such as stage presence, expressiveness, and interpretation) and are submitted with a video. Drama winners participate in the national stage show instead of the writers seminars.

All gold medal winners from the national competition in the creative writing division will be invited to attend a writing seminar at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

1. All entries in the dance, drama and music divisions must be completed after April 1, 2020.
2. Each entry must be submitted as a **WORD DOCUMENT ONLY**. Do not send PDF attachments. **HARD COPIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. Editable options are required to fit content on necessary paper or files for presentation purposes. Content of the entry will not be altered.
3. Entries must be submitted as text only. Do not send documents with pictures or graphics. Only the text of the entry will be judged.



4. Entries must be submitted as Word documents in 12-point font. Do not send PDF attachments.
5. All entries submitted into the Creative Writing Division must be original compositions written solely by the eligible Veteran who is submitting the entry.
6. Do not send Word documents that have pictures or graphics in the background. Only the text of the entry will be judged.
7. The Veterans name, VA facility (Eastern Colorado Health Care System), and title of the piece must be included in the Word document.
8. Follow the rules for the category you are entering
9. If an entry has won a gold medal in the creative writing division at the national level in any category it MAY NOT BE re-submitted into the Creative Writing division in a subsequent year.
10. Collections of poems, essays, stories, etc. submitted as one entry will not be allowed.

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## Creative Writing Division Judging Process

Entries submitted into the Creative Writing Division will be judged based upon the merit of the original work, creative content, message clarity, use of language, originality of topic or idea, and overall strength. Creative Writing entries will be solely via written piece.

### Sample Creative Writing Judging Score Sheet

Category Number:	Category Name:
Title of Entry:	

<b>Creative Content</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Message Clarity</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Use of Language</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Originality of Topic or Idea</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Overall Strength of Composition</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**\*Note:** References to diagnosis and explanations of emotional or personal content related to the entry or Veteran will not be read or communicated to the national judges. The exception to this rule is an entry submitted into a category that require a write-up.

**TIP:** Grammar and spelling is judged in the Message Clarity and Overall Strength of Composition, be sure to check your spelling and grammar. Spell Check/Grammar Check is not always accurate to the content of the sentence.

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# Creative Writing Categories

1. **Poetry Rhyming** - A verse composition, **no longer than 48 lines** in length. Poetry humorous entries should be submitted into the Humor category.
2. **Poetry Non-Rhyming** - A composition, **no longer than 48 lines** in length. Poetry humorous entries should be submitted into the Humor category.
3. **Personal Essay** - A non-fiction composition based on something the writer has experienced or felt. Entries in this category must not exceed 850 words.
4. **Humor** - All types of works which employ humor as the primary component should be submitted in this category. **Poetry entries should be no longer than 48 lines and prose entries must not exceed 850 words.**
5. **Short, Short Story** - A short story, no longer than 1,000 words in length. The story must have a beginning, middle, and an end.
6. **Short Script** - Part of a short script for one or more characters, documenting the movement, actions, expression, and dialogue of the characters. Entries in this category must be no longer than 850 words in length.
7. **Military Experience Poetry** – Poetry entries related to military experience should be submitted in this category. Entries must be **no longer than 48 lines in length**.
8. **Military Experience (not poetry)** – Entries (not poetry) related to military experience should be submitted in this category. **Entries in this category must not exceed 850 words.**
9. **Special Recognition** - Individual or group. Entries by Veterans who exhibit creative expression through use of creative writing while possessing significant physical or psychological limitations. The intent of this category is to reinforce the concept of the arts as therapy, where individuals use artistic expression to facilitate successful treatment outcomes. **Poetry entries should be no longer than 48 lines and prose entries must not exceed 850 words.**

Entries in this category **MUST** also include:

- **A Word document containing a typed statement/narrative** (25 to 225 words) composed by a VA staff person or the Veteran explaining why the Veteran is deserving of special recognition. **Entries submitted without a write-up will not be judged.**
- Consent form 10-3203 and 10-5345 (included in this handbook) must be signed and dated by the Veteran. The staff contact person submitting the entry for the Veteran should safeguard the signed consent forms at their VA facility.